

Hiking and Camping Near Mount St. Helens



Photo by Scott Hinderman

Crater and valley north of the volcano as seen from the Boundary Trail east of the Johnston Ridge Observatory.

West side (State Route 504)	Round Trip	Elevation Change	Description
Birth of a Lake Trail #246 (E) SR504, Trailhead is located at Coldwater Lake Picnic Area.	0.6 miles	2490 feet to 2475 feet	Paved trail explores 1980 landslide deposit and developing life in a lake that was dammed-up by the 1980 eruption.
Eruption Trail #201 (E) Trailhead is located at Johnston Ridge Observatory viewing plaza.	1 mile	4200 feet to 4300 feet	Paved trail explores 1980 eruption impact on ridge. View shattered trees and amazing crater and valley views.
Hummocks Trail #229 (M) SR504, Trailhead is 2¼ miles south of Coldwater Visitor Center.	2.4 mile loop	2520 feet to 2400 feet	View hill-sized chunks of shattered volcano, ponds and river-carved canyon on 1980 landslide deposit.
Lakes Trail #211 to Coldwater Trail #230 (MD) SR504, Trailhead is located at Coldwater Lake Boat Launch.	9.0 miles	2700 feet to 5200 feet	Explore blowdown and developing forest. At 4 miles, end of lake makes a good turn around point. Continue ½ mile to junction with Coldwater Trail 230.

East side (Forest Road 99)	Round Trip	Elevation Change	Description
Meta Lake Trail #210 (E) Forest Road 99, 0.1 miles west of junction of Road 99 with Road 26.	0.6 mile	3620 feet to 3640 feet	Paved trail explores blowdown forest and sparkling lake. View forest that survived eruption under thick snowpack.
Independence Pass Trail #227 (M) Forest Road 99, 1½ miles south of Cascades Peaks.	0.5 mile	4040 feet to 4680 feet	Trail climbs (¼ mile) to ridge top view of Mount St. Helens, Spirit Lake, and the blown down forest.
Windy Ridge Sand Ladder (M) North end of the Windy Ridge Viewpoint Parking Lot.	0.5 mile	4070 feet to 4270 feet	Climb 368 steps to hilltop view of Spirit Lake and crater. Use caution as loose pumice can make for unstable footing.
Harmony Trail #224 (MD) Forest Road 99, 2½ miles north of Windy Ridge Viewpoint. Off-trail travel, pets and bikes are prohibited.	2 miles	4100 feet to 3400 feet	Trail descends steeply to Spirit Lake (this is only trail to shoreline). View the effects of lateral blast and "tidal" wave formed as landslide slammed into lake.
Truman Trail #207 and Willow Springs Trail #207A (MD) Forest Road 99, trailhead at south end of Windy Ridge parking lot. Off-trail travel, pets and bicycles prohibited.	11 miles	4200 feet to 3600 feet	Trail follows old road into Spirit Lake basin. Wooden posts mark path across boulder-filled floodplain. Willow Springs Trail (0.8 mile) connects with Loowit Trail 216 and other loop opportunities.



Photo by Gregg Pohll, USFS

Sand ladder stairway at Windy Ridge Viewpoint. Barren gray area visible along trail is result of damage from off-trail travel.



Visitors can crawl through the cast of an ancient tree at Trail of Two Forests.

South side (Forest Road 83)	Round Trip	Elevation Change	Description
Trail of Two Forests #233 (E) Forest Road 8303, ½ mile E of Ape Cave.	0.6 mile	1860 feet to 1885 feet	Boardwalk guides you across 1,900 year old lava flow and tree casts that record an ancient forest consumed by lava.
June Lake Trail #216B (M) Forest Road 83 temporarily closed due to flood damage. Park at Marble Mtn Snowpark and follow temporary trail signs to June Lake trail.	3.2 miles	2700 feet to 3400 feet	Trail climbs along rushing stream before reaching lake nestled between basalt cliff and 1,900 year old lava flow. Lake offers ideal lunch stop before continuing ¼ mile to junction with Loowit Trail 216.

Campgrounds	# sites	\$ Fee	🏠	♿	🚰	🐟	🏕️	🚚	🗑️
Highway 503 & FR 90									
Cresap Bay *	73	yes for all sites	20	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cougar	60		●	●	●	●	●	●	
Beaver Bay *	78		5	●	●	●	●	●	●
Swift	93		6	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lower Falls	42		4	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lewis River Horse Camp	8		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Forest Road 81									
Kalama Horse Camp	28	yes	2	●	●	●	●	●	●
Merrill Lake	8	yes	6	●	●	●	●	●	●
Forest Road 25									
Iron Creek **	98	yes	12	●	●	●	●	●	●
Forest Road 23									
Tower Rock **	22	yes							●
State Route 504									
Sequest State Park	90	yes	many	●	●	●	●	●	●

* Reservations are required: Call (503) 813-6666 ** Reservations are accepted. Call (877) 444-6777.

KEY:

(E)=EASIEST
Users require limited skill and encounter few challenges.

(M) = MORE DIFFICULT
Users require some skill and experience more challenging terrain.

(MD) = MOST DIFFICULT
Users require a high degree of skill and experience.



"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." – Dr. Seuss, The Lorax